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ABSTRACT

To help raise the level of funding for the nation's community colleges, Project Reinvest was created to help colleges communicate their role in solving the nation's problems and the importance of adequate funding. Specifically, the project seeks to encourage colleges' participation in efforts to develop a genuine understanding of their institutions and the need for strong local support and to provide information and assistance for colleges developing fundraising campaigns. To assist fundraising efforts at the national level, articles on the colleges will be prepared for such periodicals as flight magazines, business-oriented magazines, and general circulation publications. In addition, efforts will be coordinated with local institutions, the American Association of Community Colleges, and the League for Innovation in the Community College to increase visibility through newspaper articles and radio and television presentations. To aid efforts at the local level, packages of support material will be prepared for use by local colleges, including guides on building local support and private fundraising and converting local campaigns to the state level. Participating institutions will be enrolled through their presidents in a project information interchange and networking system managed by the project director. Finally, the director will also conduct site visits to help institutions organize or make community presentations. (KP)

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PROJECT REINVEST:

INVEST IN AMERICA'S FUTURE BY REINVESTING IN AMERICA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

A PROJECT OF

THE

LEAGUE FOR INNOVATION

IN THE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

DIRECTED

BY

ROBERT H. MCCABE

SENIOR FELLOW

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PROJECT REINVEST:

INVEST IN AMERICA'S FUTURE BY REINVESTING IN AMERICA'S COMMUNITY COLLEGES

I. RATIONALE

These are very difficult times for America. As we go through the conversion to an information-age economy and society, our problems seem to grow exponentially. We worry about the decline in values and the rapid rise in crime. Homeless people seem to be everywhere. Problems with drugs and alcohol are rampant. The cost of sustaining a large and growing population in a dependent status--the growth of the underclass--threatens the very well-being of our nation.

We know in our hearts that in a nation with our wealth, individuals should not be living in the conditions in which so many find themselves. When persons live in these conditions, it impacts the quality of life for all of us. In addition, we are faced with the rapidly escalating cost of sustaining the dependent population and the lack of a quality workforce to support our industry in an internationally competitive economy. There is little doubt, and the election of 1994 confirmed, that the people of America are frustrated and want these problems addressed. The tendency, however, is to look for immediate solutions such as limitations on the support for dependant individuals and more prisons. (There are now for the first time over a million Americans incarcerated, the highest rate of any country except Russia.) Long-term solutions will take massive efforts, are complex, and involve changing the way people grow up and live their lives. It is evident that once dependent individuals are productively employed, they will find ways to improve the quality of their lives and the

way their children grow up. They will not be on public support and they will contribute as members of a quality workforce. Business and industry continue to document the tremendous gap between the skills of Americans and those needed for productive employment. Empowering individuals to improve their own lives through acquiring employable skills is the quickest way to reduce the underclass.

Community colleges are the institutions with the greatest capability to immediately move significant numbers of Americans from dependent to self-sufficient status. They are "a golden resource in this time of economic change." Yet the funding for these institutions has become marginal at best, falling well behind support for universities and public schools. Despite being the most practical, efficient, and productive of our educational systems, they have been undervalued, underappreciated, and underfunded. Community Colleges are simply misunderstood. By continued underfunding of community colleges, our nation is systematically starving the most indentifiable solution to our most pressing problems. There is considerable evidence to document that community colleges are on the verge of losing the ability to offer the quality service that our nation requires. This is manifested in the continuing growth in the number of sections taught by part-time instructors, lack of funds for up-to-date equipment, decline in student support personnel, and salary inadequacies.

An analysis shows that community colleges are virtually always very well-regarded in their own communities, but consistently less supported than universities and public schools by state legislatures. Recently, Miami-Dade had placed a $100 million endowment referendum before the public and Maricopa had placed a

$385 million bond referendum before the public, both passed by approximately two-thirds votes. This success makes the point, that with a proper campaign, local community support can be built. There is much to be learned from these and similar efforts. The case for community colleges is overwhelmingly positive. It is clear, that if the colleges are to regain appropriate resources, they must develop and institute carefully designed and broad based campaigns to build community-wide support for the institutions. This can be the basis for campaigns to improve local, state and private funding. Multi-college, coordinated local campaigns can be devised as the basis for approaching the state legislatures.

It is time to invest in America's future by reinvesting in America's community colleges. This imperative is not simply to have quality community colleges, but to address the most serious problems facing our nation. America's community colleges have the answers the nation has been searching for.

II. PROJECT GOALS

A. To systematically bring to the attention of the American public the importance of community colleges, their lack of support, and the need to reinvest in these institutions.

B. To stimulate community colleges throughout the country to participate in efforts to develop a genuine understanding of their institutions and the need for strong public support in their own communities.

C. To provide information and resources to institutions to assist them in developing campaigns of support for local funding, state funding, and private contributions.

III. THE PROJECT

A. General

1. The key for the development of the national support will be the sum of the efforts of community colleges in their local communities.

B. National Effort

1. To assist the campaign and help the local efforts, a series of articles will be prepared for periodicals of general circulation including flight magazines, business-oriented magazines, and general circulation publications.
2. Working together with local institutions, with the AACC, and with the League for Innovation in the Community College, there will be an effort to place newspaper articles throughout the country. Some of these will be general and others will be on selected themes about individual institutions in their own communities.
3. Efforts will be made for talk show and radio and television presentations. This could include "specials" by the International Community College aired by Jones Education Network.

C. Local Effort

1. A package of support material will be prepared for use by local colleges. This will include:
   a. A practical "why" and "how" guide on building a local support campaign.

b. A practical "why" and "how" guide to using the campaign to build private fundraising support.

c. Practical suggestions on how to convert that campaign to improve support locally and in concert with other community colleges, at the state level.

d. Outline and suggestions for articles that could be generated at the colleges to be placed in local newspapers. This will contribute to both the local and national campaigns.

2. The kick-off for this effort will be at the 1995 American Association of Community Colleges convention.

D. Participating institutions will be enrolled through tneir presidents in a project information interchange and networking system managed by Robert McCabe.

E. Robert McCabe will be available to visit institutions to help them organize or to make presentations to community or institutional groups. This will be at limited expense to the institutions. He plans two or three tours during the 1995-96 college year. When institutions in reasonable proximity join one of the tours, the cost will be kept to a minimum.